

Abroad

Baghdad

Forgotten

The war between Iran and Iraq is well over two years old now, and it has been effectively stalemated for most of that time. Foreign observers estimate that Iraq has lost 25,000 men so far and Iran perhaps twice that. The Iraqis regularly bombard the island of Kharz in the Persian Gulf, and the Iraqi high command claimed this fall that its army had driven the Iranians back over their border near the port of Basra, but that assertion had to be withdrawn after Iran launched a series of successful border incursions. Nevertheless, the Iraqis' morale is relatively high after having fought successfully on home ground. The government of President Saddam Hussein is being supported by loans from the Arab Gulf states to the tune of about \$1 billion a month, and for the moment the specter of an Iranian steamroller has faded. In the long run, however, Iraq's leadership fears that Teheran is determined to break up the coalition of Arab Sunni Moslem states and forge an axis across the Middle East—even going so far as to restore the relationship between Israel and Iran that existed under the Shah. Such a grandiose ambition, the Iraqis maintain, is founded on the Ayatollah Khomeini's Shi'ite Moslem fundamentalism, which aims at breaking up existing Arab nations into fragmented tribal groupings at the mercy of a dominant Iran. Iraq, as the biggest such state, with a population of twenty million expected by the end of the century, and with both oil and water for development, would be the first and most important victim. Meanwhile oil continues to flow in various amounts to world markets from both countries, despite the sinking of a number of foreign merchant ships in the Shatt-al-Arab, the waterway to the Persian Gulf, which forms the boundary between Iran and Iraq. However, if the Ayatollah is able to reinvigorate his battered forces with their original revolutionary drive, and make better use of the by-now deteriorating arsenal created by the Shah, there may eventually be a turning point in what is coming to be known as the world's forgotten war.

Florence

Troppo

The ancient capital of Tuscany, one of the greatest art centers in the world, is being choked by tourists, to the despair of the local population. Florence has something under half a million inhabitants, but more than six million visitors crowd into its narrow streets, its venerable churches, its palaces and galleries every year. On a typical summer's day, six hundred tour buses invade the city. "The tourists arrive like an army of occupation," says Professor Giovanni Koenig, an architectural historian and authority on city preservation, "and they feel protected in their armored cars, the buses. No one uses the streets for walking any more. It's like a continual demonstration. Naturally, no one has any social contact with the inhabitants. The tourists stay in their own groups." It has become difficult to visit the museums, where tourists are so numerous they lean against the statues and threaten to knock them over. "We must recognize that unlimited and uncontrolled frequentation of the most prestigious heritage

of our national patrimony is simply irresponsible," adds another Florentine official. Would a solution be to close the gates of Florence, as it were—at least to organized tourism? "That is not possible," says Professor Koenig. "There is no authority in any position to commit so imperious an act."

London

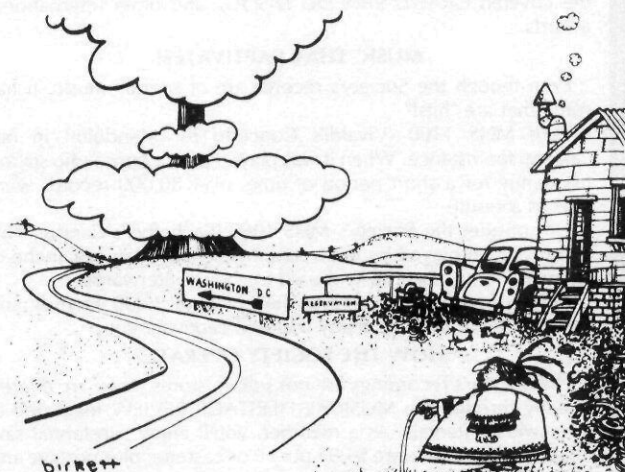
Few Chips

The electronic revolution in printing and publishing has hardly touched the editorial operations of newspapers, magazines, and book publishers in Britain, according to a survey by the Institute of Journalists. Fewer than one in six offices have anything more modern than a conventional typewriter. Many publishers and editors blame labor resistance for this state of affairs, which is in striking contrast to the situation in other countries. Close to half the firms use some form of photographic typesetting equipment, but only a small fraction of them allow journalists to send what they write directly from their terminals to typesetting machinery. Most of the companies said that profits had been affected—some said "greatly affected"—by what a government official described as "archaic practices." David Parrington, chairman of the institute's Technology Committee, remarked that the situation was "highly dangerous" for all publishing. "Newspapers in particular will come to an end unless journalists have their own computer terminals," he added.

Inverness

Sits Fair the Wind

Fair Isle—an isolated speck in the frigid sea between the Shetland and Orkney Islands off the north coast of Scotland—has been saved by a windmill. Called an aerogenerator, the machine, which will withstand winds of up to 170 miles an hour, was installed on the island recently as the answer to the rising cost of diesel fuel, which previously provided the power for Fair Isle's 71 inhabitants. A resident meteorologist figured out that there was sufficient wind sweeping across the island year round to power a 55-kilowatt generator most of the time. With some help from the Scottish development boards, the "windy light," as it is called, started operating two months ago. This problem solved, the island should once again thrive: the employment situation on Fair Isle is excellent, as there is a five-month waiting list for the island's famous and only product—the Fair Isle sweater.



Birkett, Punch

"I wish I'd said that."

Rothco

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